



Summer Holidays

Melissa Chin



Summer is the perfect season for relaxing, enjoying the outdoors and spending quality time with family and friends. Thankfully, there are various holidays during the Summer that give us the opportunity to do all three of these things. These holidays include Memorial Day, Father’s day and the Fourth of July, also known as Independence Day. Read on to learn more about these holidays, as well as how you can celebrate them this year in the Champaign-Urbana area.

Memorial Day

In the United States, the last Monday of May marks Memorial Day, holiday that pays tribute to men and women who have died while serving in the U.S. military.



The holiday is often marked by visits to soldier cemeteries, as well as parades that involve marches led by military personnel. Although Memorial Day is officially on Monday, May 30th this year, the festivities will begin during the weekend. One of the largest Memorial Day parades in the country will take place in Chicago on Saturday, May 28th with a wreath laying ceremony at 11 a.m. followed by a procession at 12 p.m. that will begin at the intersection of State and Lake Streets. You can find more information

Father’s Day

Every year, the people of the United States celebrate Father’s day on the third Sunday of June. This year, the holiday will take place on Sunday, June 19th. On Father’s Day, people make special efforts to show their dads how much they appreciate them by showering them with cards and gifts. There will be various Father’s Day events in Champaign Urbana, including the Champaign Park District’s Sholem Father’s Day Celebration. You can learn more about that event [here](#).

The Fourth of July/ Independence Day

Without question, the Fourth of July is one of the largest U.S. holidays of the year. This holiday, which commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, 1776, celebrates the emergence of the United States of America as an independent nation that was no longer under the control of the British Empire. Modern celebrations of the Fourth of July almost always involve red, white and blue clothing, barbecues and, of course, firework displays. Many people choose to celebrate this day with family and friends by throwing parties and taking the time to watch their local firework show. You can learn more about the history of the Fourth of July holiday [here](#), and you can find a list of Illinois Fourth of July firework displays [here](#).



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A Brief History of Champaign-Urbana (or is it Urbana-Champaign?)

Jennie Avery

You may have noticed that the residents of Champaign-Urbana (or Urbana-Champaign, depending on who you ask) have rather strong opinions about the two cities that comprise this university town. (Don't even get them started on Savoy).

So which came first – Champaign or Urbana? If you guessed Urbana, then you're right! The city of Urbana was originally settled in 1822, when the first settlers came to the prairie, attracted by the rich soil and its promise of plentiful harvests. These pioneers began to develop their new home in a wooded area which they called "Big Grove." The formation of the city was made official with a celebration in 1833, as Champaign County was formed with Urbana as the county seat.

Population and urban growth in Urbana were slow, likely due to the common opinion held at the time that "the prairie was not a fit habitation for man." The city began to see a notable increase in growth rate when the Illinois Central Railroad underwent a massive construction project, running a rail line through Central Illinois from Chicago, which passed about 2 miles west of Urbana. Initially upset that the rail was built so far from the city center, families considered moving their homes closer to the line to make transportation of their goods and services more convenient. However, most decided against such a move due to the swampy land surrounding the railroad. While most of the original settlers opted to remain in Urbana, there was a steady influx of new inhabitants to the area around the railroad. This area was originally referred to as West Urbana, but as it grew, its inhabitants began to form their own identity, and in 1861 voted to make their town into a city – Champaign. This made the people of Urbana uneasy, as they thought that the people of Champaign may try to make their city the county seat. To prevent this, a new county courthouse was built in Urbana, which was so fancy that it they believed it would be impossible to move the county seat from Urbana to Champaign. (They were right – until today, the courthouse is located in Urbana).

Both cities continued to grow and expand at a steady rate, but left a strip of land a mile and a half wide between them. This strategically-located strip of land became very important in the founding of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

In the 1860s news came to Champaign-Urbana that the state of Illinois was planning to open an agricultural university in the central region of the state. A man named Clark Griggs was elected to the state legislature and tasked with convincing the state government to select Champaign-Urbana as the location of the new university. Mr. Griggs was successful in convincing the committee to build the Illinois Industrial University (which would later become the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) in Champaign-Urbana. And the location that was selected for the University? The mile and a half strip of land between Urbana and Champaign.

Since the founding of the University, there have been a number of attempts to combine the two cities, as well as an attempt by one of the cities to expand its borders to include the entire university. However, until today, Champaign and Urbana have remained two separate cities, coexisting peacefully, side by side, until of course, one makes the mistake of asking where you can get the best cup of coffee or which city is better to live in and a battle ensues in defense of the preferred city.





USA in the Summer Olympics

Nick Dunn



The eyes of the world will be on Rio this summer as Brazil hosts the 2016 Summer Olympics. As always (well, almost always, there was that one time in 1980), US athletes will be competing for pride and medals in a whole host of sports and other Olympic activities (like rhythmic gymnastics and trampolining).

My love for the Olympics started, as it did for so many American men my age, with legendary sprinter and long jumper Carl Lewis, showing off superhuman strength back when I thought superheroes might really be real. He won long jump gold with ease after just one attempt, a 28-footer. For perspective, that's like leaping from the NBA three-point line at the top of the arc all the way to the goal, with a few feet left over. Steph Curry makes that distance look like nothing with a basketball, but Carl Lewis made it look like nothing with his entire being. Watching him, I almost believed I too could fly.

And of course 1992 was a banner year for American Olympics supporters, with the Dream Team returning the USA Basketball team to dominance. Sometimes called the greatest team in sports history, the Dream Team featured some of the best players of all time, in their prime. Magic Johnson. Larry Bird. Michael Jordan. Charles Barkley. Those four alone might have won a gold medal. With eleven pros and, inexplicably, Christian Laettner representing the college ranks, they proved dominant, scoring more than 100 points every game, and winning by an average of more than 40 points. This was a team so good that five-time NCAA and two-time Olympic champion Coach Mike Krzyzewski was an assistant coach. And don't even get me started on women's football, a sport you'd think we won the right to invent, and completely dominate, as a consolation prize for how awful our men's team is. Will American basketball keep the dream alive this summer in Rio? Can our women's football team make it four gold medals in a row without the greatest of all time, Abby Wambach? We'll definitely be watching August 5th through 21st to find out; will you?

Illini in the Olympics

Nick Dunn



As you know, Illinois is a preeminent international university, and our athletics program is no exception. Over 60 Illinois athletes have competed in the Olympics, with Edward Lindberg being the first Illini to win gold all the way back in 1912. Almost 20 international Illini have competed in the Olympics under the banner of their home countries, including Jamaica, the Dutch, Germany, Turkey, Canada, Great Britain, Liberia, and Sweden. This year, former Fighting Illini track star Ashley Kelly will be competing in the 200m sprint for the British Virgin Islands. I hope you join me in cheering on our fellow Illini and all the athletes at the 2016 Summer Olympics.

ISSS Favorite Summer Sports Movies

While the weather is steadily improving, there will still be a few rainy summer days. Enjoy these ISSS staff favorite summer sports movies while you're stuck inside!

Jennie: *The Sandlot*. The quintessential story of summer in the United States: baseball, s'mores and the Tilt-aWhirl at the State Fair. And the flash-forward at the end to show the childhood friendships that endured the test of time will warm even the coldest heart.

Kara: *Seabiscuit*. While it's not the most traditional sport, horseracing has always been a favorite of mine, and the annual Kentucky Derby means that summer is just around the corner. *Seabiscuit* is about an underdog race horse in the Great Depression era. This movie is a favorite of mine because it's an inspiring story, and it takes place during an important and influential time in U.S. history.

Kirby: *Race*. *Race* is a biographical sports film about Jesse Owens, an African American track and field star who went on to compete and win at the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin, Germany. Amidst the racial tensions at home in the U.S. and Nazi Germany, Owens finds a way to navigate the competition within the Big Ten conference and the world. *Race* documents the running star's journey to the Olympics and living the "American Dream".

Martin: *INVICTUS*. I remember watching the 1995 Rugby World Cup every day, following the incredible story of the Springboks. The games were riveting, the backstory amazing. So when I heard they were making a movie about the team, I found myself surprisingly uninterested. As a huge sports fan, I generally don't enjoy sports movies as I find sport has enough drama and excitement in them naturally, and I couldn't imagine that *Invictus* wouldn't just be a poor re-run of what I had watched live over the summer of '95. I was thankfully wrong. The movie is fantastic.

Melissa: *Cool Runnings*! It's technically not a summer movie, but part of the movie takes place in Jamaica, where it's basically summer all the time. The movie follows four Jamaican men and their American coach as they defy all odds by making it to the Winter Olympics as Jamaica's first bobsleigh team. It's a hilarious comedy about believing in yourself and achieving the impossible.

Nick: *Caddyshack* (1980). "Golf is not a sport," you say, and you're right, but this quintessential 70s/80s comedy is really about the games we play in life: hustling and working hard to get into college. Overcoming classism and snobbery. Finding true love. Hunting gophers with rifles and high explosives.

Stephanie: *League of Their Own*. I played softball growing up, so I love that this movie is about women playing BASEBALL, in a time when baseball was threatened to be shut down during World War II. Even though this movie is a comedy, it shows that women can be more competitive than men!

Will: *Angels in the Outfield*. I played little league, and Danny Glover can fix everything. It was also a touching tale of family and friendship.



Have anything that you'd like to see in future Cultural Spotlight editions? Sports, holidays, local wildlife? Let us know! Email Jennie Avery at jsavery@illinois.edu with your suggestions for future content!